



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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No. 19.

NEW YORK, MAY 10, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS TRAPPED; OR THE BEAUTIFUL TORY. BY HARRY MOORE



"Will you enter, young sirs?" the beautiful maiden asked. "My father will be pleased to extend hospitality to all persons wearing the uniforms of patriot soldiers!"

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CHAPTER I.

PUZZLED.

"What does it mean, Dick?"

"I don't know, Bob."

It was the 1st day of August, 1777.

It was an excessively hot day.

The sun beat down with appalling force.

The two youths of perhaps eighteen years of age stood upon a promontory on the south end of New Jersey, at a point where they could look out over Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

Off shore, perhaps three miles distant, was a fleet of vessels.

The vessels were warships, and were the ships constituting the British fleet under Admiral Howe.

The patriot army now occupied a position near Philadelphia.

General Washington had learned that the British fleet had sailed southwardly from New York with the purpose of reaching Philadelphia by water.

He had at once broke camp at Morristown, N. J., where he had his army quartered, and moved southward.

It was his purpose to meet the British, and keep them from entering Philadelphia from the south, if possible.

Having taken up his position near Philadelphia, the commander-in-chief had sent for Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, two youths who had done good work during the past year as spies and scouts, and he had sent them southward, to the southernmost extremity of New Jersey, with instructions to keep a sharp lookout for the British fleet, and to hasten back with the news, as soon as the fleet had entered the mouth of the Delaware River.

Dick and Bob liked such work as this.

They were members of a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76"—indeed Dick had organized the company, and was its captain.

They loved to fight.

The excitement of battle was very pleasing to them, and just suited their energetic, enthusiastic temperaments; but they also liked the work of spies and scouts.

There was plenty of danger connected with those avocations.

And this made the work attractive to their minds.

They were not reckless and foolhardy, by any means, but they were strong patriots, and were happy when dealing the strongest blows at the British, so welcomed every opportunity to do so.

They were aware of the fact that when playing the parts of successful spies and scouts, they were dealing strong blows at the British, and this was the reason they were glad to do that kind of work.

They had been here two days.

They had kept a sharp lookout for the British fleet.

They feared it might get past them in the night time, but it had not done so, as was proved on this morning, when the ships appeared in sight.

The youths had watched the approaching fleet with eager eyes.

That it would sail up the Delaware Bay and River they had had no doubt.

They understood that this was what it had come there to do.

But, suddenly, when almost directly opposite the point where the youths stood, the entire fleet had come to a stop.

Presently the vessels began wearing around, and, to the great surprise of Dick and Bob, the fleet turned and headed out to sea again.

It was headed in a southerly direction.

The youths watched the fleet as it slowly drew away in wondering amazement.

It was then that Bob had asked the question with which we opened this story: "What does it mean, Dick?"

And Dick replied: "I don't know, Bob."

The action of the British fleet was certainly puzzling.

Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook were two as bright youths as could have been found in a year's search, but they could not figure out to their satisfaction what the action of the fleet meant.

Dick's first idea seemed to both to be the more feasible of any either had advanced.

This was that the British had decided to delay entering the Delaware River until after nightfall.

He reasoned that they had thought that perhaps Washington might have suspected that they had sailed for Philadelphia, and that he might have sent scouts to keep watch for the fleet's approach.

In that case they might, by sailing back out to sea as if sailing away, deceive the scouts and make them think the idea of sailing up the river to Philadelphia had been abandoned.

"If that is their scheme we will fool them a bit, Bob," said Dick.

"That's right, Dick."

"We won't go away just yet."

"No; we will stay here till we know what they are up to."

"It will be impossible, unless it should cloud up to-night, for them to get past without us seeing them, for it will be moonlight all night, and we will be enabled to see almost as well as though it was daytime."

"Right, old man; and it doesn't look now as though there was much danger of it clouding up."

"No; it is clear and beautiful."

"I am confident that is the scheme they are going to try to work, Dick," said Bob, after a few minutes of watching the British fleet.

"I rather think so, Bob."

"Well, we will know by morning."

"Yes; if they are doing this for effect they will come back and sail up the river to-night."

"And if they do we'll see them."

"Yes; we will take turns at sleeping and watching. One of us will be on watch every hour of the night."

The youths kept their eyes on the British fleet.

It gradually faded away, the ships which were in the lead disappearing behind the far horizon one after another.

It was slow work, however.

The ships had to go partially against the wind, and their speed was not great.

It was past noon before the last one disappeared from the view of the youths.

"I suppose they'll lie to after getting out a bit farther," said Bob; "and beat about, backward and forward, till nightfall."

"Likely, Bob."

The youths ate their noonday lunch, and then threw themselves down in the shade of a tree, which stood alone almost at the very top of the promontory.

Lying in the shade of this tree, and where the cool sea

breeze blew upon them, the youths felt very comfortable indeed.

Having nothing to do, save to lie there and look out over the blue waters of the bay and talk, the youths' thoughts naturally turned to their homes and folks, and—to their sweethearts.

Dick and Bob lived within a quarter of a mile of each other on farms, near Tarrytown, N. Y.

They had grown up together.

They had gone to school together, had hunted, fished, and swam together.

To crown all, and more closely cement them in the bonds of friendship, Dick and Bob had fallen in love with each other's sister.

Two sweeter girls than Edith Slater and Alice Estabrook it would have been hard to find.

They were past sixteen, and were the most beautiful girls in the neighborhood in which they lived.

And on this afternoon the youths talked of their sweethearts and wondered what the girls were doing.

It would be safe to say that the girls were thinking and talking of Dick and Bob at the same time, for they did this every day.

Sometimes the youths were engaged in such exciting and dangerous work that their sweethearts were driven from their thoughts, but it was not thus with the girls.

It did the youths good to have an occasional talk about their sweethearts, and they enjoyed this afternoon's siesta and talk heartily.

The afternoon passed away with remarkable quickness, and it was nearing evening before they knew it.

The youths had kept a sharp lookout seaward, but had seen nothing of the British fleet since it had disappeared from sight at midday.

Dick climbed to the topmost boughs of the tree to take one good look before the sun should set, but even from the treetop he could see nothing of the British fleet.

He looked in every direction earnestly and carefully, but not a sail was in sight.

He came down and so reported to Bob.

"They have gone farther out to sea than I thought they would," he said.

"So they have," agreed Bob; "I would not have thought they would go so far, if they intended coming back and re-entering the Delaware River to-night."

"Nor I. I don't understand it."

"Perhaps the wind was so unfavorable as to practically force them to go farther out than they wished."

"That might be; but I hardly think so."

The youths were somewhat puzzled.

They dismissed the subject from their minds, however, and proceeded to eat their supper.

They had procured the food at a farmhouse a half-mile distant, paying for it liberally.

"Say, Dick," said Bob, as they were eating away heartily, for they were healthy, and their appetites were splendid; "I believe the people where we got this grub are Tories."

"I think so myself, Bob."

"And I believe that man who was there yesterday evening when we got the grub was suspicious of us."

"You think he suspected that we were patriots?"

"Yes."

"I halfway thought so myself. He asked a good many questions, didn't he?"

"Yes; he was too inquisitive altogether to suit me!"

"There seems to be a good many Tories down in this part of the country."

"You are right; we ran across a number as we were coming here."

"So we did. Well, just so those folks don't refuse to sell us grub, Dick, they can be as suspicious and inhospitable as they like otherwise."

"That's the way I feel about it, Bob."

But had the youths known what was brewing, they would have felt differently.

The suspicions of the Tories in question were to bear fruit and cause the youths trouble.

Dick and Bob finished their supper, put the remnants of the food away, as it would be all they would have for breakfast, and threw themselves down once more at the foot of the tree.

They remained quietly there for nearly an hour, and then, just as the sun was sinking to rest, they made their way down to the beach, and, undressing, went into the water for a bath and a swim.

The youths enjoyed this hugely.

They were both expert swimmers, and they swam about fearlessly.

They remained in the water half an hour, and then as it began to grow dark they went ashore, donned their clothes and made their way back up to the top of the promontory.

As the sun had disappeared from sight, the moon, full, round, and bright, had risen in the east, and the youths were confident the British fleet could not get past them and enter the mouth of the Delaware River without their seeing it.

They thought it best for one to watch at a time, however, and it was decided that Dick should keep watch till mid-

night, when he would awaken Bob, who would watch till daylight.

This plan was followed out.

Bob lay down on his army blanket at the foot of the tree and was soon sound asleep, while Dick sat with his back against the tree and kept his eyes fixed on the broad expanse of water lying spread out at his feet.

Dick watched till midnight.

The fleet of British warships had not put in an appearance.

Dick awakened Bob, and, after exchanging a few words, he lay down, while Bob took his station with his back to the tree, to keep watch for the warships.

One hour, two hours passed.

Then from out of the darkness caused by the shadows cast by some large bowlders a short distance from the tree appeared four skulking figures.

The figures were those of four men, and the fellows stole cautiously toward the spot where the youths were stationed.

Evidently serious danger threatened the brave youths.

CHAPTER II.

OVER THE PRECIPICE.

Dick, of course, was sound asleep.

Bob sat on the opposite side of the tree, his face toward the south, his eyes looking out over the water of the bay.

So he could not see the approaching skulkers.

The only chance would be that he might hear them.

But they were careful to make no noise.

They were very light on their feet.

They were as skillful as the redmen of the forest.

Why were they slipping up on the youths in this manner?

Who were they?

This remained to be seen.

That their intentions were not of the best was evident.

They would not have exercised such care in approaching, otherwise.

Forward they stole.

Presently they were within a few feet of the youths.

They paused.

They seemed to be taking a survey of the situation.

They whispered together for a few moments.

Then two stole forward and took up their station near the tree.

Two remained where they were.

One of the men gave a signal, and all four leaped forward.

Two leaped upon Dick.

The other two leaped upon Bob.

Of course, Dick, being asleep, was very much surprised by such a rude awakening.

Bob was scarcely less surprised.

They did not give up; by any means, however.

They were not the kind of youths to yield without a struggle, no matter how great the odds against them.

So they struggled fiercely.

They fought with all their might.

Had they not been taken at such a disadvantage, it was speedily demonstrated that they would have been able to defeat the object of the men who had attacked them.

Dick made almost superhuman efforts to break loose from the two who had hold of him.

He succeeded in getting to his feet.

Encouraged by this Dick struggled still more fiercely.

He made desperate and determined efforts to wrench himself free from the grasp of the fellows.

In his efforts at wrenching himself free, he had jerked the fellows over toward the edge of the promontory.

The promontory overhung the waters of the bay.

The water was right below, but distant more than a hundred feet.

The two men with whom Dick was struggling gave utterance of cries of fear as they felt themselves jerked toward the brink of the precipice.

They feared they might be pulled over.

A fall to the water far below would without doubt be the death of them.

Of course, Dick would have gone, too; but that would not make it any the better for them.

So, as they uttered the cries of fright, they let go of Dick.

The result was terrible for the youth.

He was just in the act of giving another terrible wrench to free himself, and as they let go at the same instant, he went backward toward the brink like a flash.

He saw his danger, and attempted to save himself.

He was too late.

He partially paused on the very edge of the precipice, whirled around, tried to keep his balance, but could not, and the next instant he disappeared over the edge of the precipice!

Bob was struggling fiercely, and was very busy indeed, but saw Dick as the youth went over, and a great cry of fright and horror went up from him.

"Dick!" he cried, in heart-broken tones; "oh, he has gone to his death!" and with superhuman strength he threw the two men from him as if they had been babies, and rushed to the brink of the precipice.

Throwing himself down upon his stomach, he stuck his head over the edge and looked down.

"Dick! oh, Dick!" he called.

There was no reply.

"He is dead!" cried Bob, his voice trembling with anguish; "oh, Dick is dead! What will his mother—what will Alice do when they hear this!"

Bob, in his anguish and sorrow, had forgotten all about the men with whom he had been struggling.

Rough hands suddenly seized him.

To make sure of being able to handle him, all four of the men had seized the youth.

Bob, thus rudely brought back to a realization of the state of affairs, tried to offer resistance.

He could do but little, however.

The odds of four against one made it impossible for him to do much.

He was practically helpless in their hands.

Then, too, the thought of the terrible fate which had overtaken Dick, took most of the vim and energy out of Bob.

He did not seem to have much strength.

It did not take the four men long to overpower the youth.

"Waal, we've got one of 'em, anyway," said one of the men in a surly tone.

"Yaas, an' we won't need to bother 'bout t'other," said another.

"That's right," growled one of the remaining two. "He came mighty near pullin' Lige an' me over the bluff."

"He did, fur a fac'," said the other, who was undoubtedly Lige. "He'll never do anything like that ag'in, though."

"You cowardly scoundrels!" cried Bob, hotly; "you have caused the death of the best fellow who ever lived, and as sure as I live and succeed in escaping from you, I shall call each and every one of you to a strict account for what you have done!"

"Sho! ye don't say," said one of the men in a sneering tone.

"But ye won't escape," said another.

"An' as fur as ther other fellow is concerned," said another of the four, "his tumblin' over ther cliff inter ther bay hez saved us ther trouble of hangin' him."

Bob's heart sank.

He realized that he had fallen into bad hands.

After talking together, at one side, away from Bob—

whose hands had been bound together behind his back—the men again approached the youth, and two of them taking hold of his arms, he was led away.

Bob wondered if he would be taken to the farmhouse where they had secured their food.

He hoped so; for there was a woman there.

She was not a woman of the most prepossessing appearance in the world, but she was a woman, and Bob did not believe she would let these men hang or shoot him.

But the men did not take him to the farmhouse.

Instead they made their way to where there was some pretty heavy timber.

They penetrated the timber a distance of perhaps half a mile.

They had followed a footpath, and at the end of the path they came to a log house in the centre of a little glade.

The men entered the cabin without ceremony.

Doubtless it was the home of one or more of them.

Bob was seated rather roughly on a split-log stool.

One of the men lighted a candle and stuck it into the neck of a wooden candlestick.

Bob eyed the fellows critically.

Bob set his teeth grimly.

He made up his mind to escape from the hands of these men if such a thing was possible.

He must do it!

He looked at the four men.

"Well," he said, addressing the one who seemed to be the leader of the gang; "now that you have me here, what are you going to do with me?"

"Waal," was the cool reply, "we hev'n't jest made up our minds about thet yit."

"Oh, you haven't?"

"No."

"Well, who and what are you fellows? Why have you made me a prisoner?"

The men laughed.

"Oh, you wanter know thet, do ye?"

"Naturally, I have a little curiosity on the subject."

Bob's heart was aching, and he could not keep his mind off the terrible fate which had overtaken his beloved friend Dick, but he forced himself to talk calmly with these brutes who had been the cause of his comrade's death.

"Et don't matter so much who and what we air," said the fellow who had done most of the talking; "et's who and what ye air what counts."

"Oh! Well, who and what am I?"

"I don't know who ye air——"

"I supposed not," remarked Bob.

"——but I know what ye air."

"Oh, you do?"

"Yaas, I do."

"Well, what am I?"

"Yer er rebel spy!"

"How do you know?"

"Oh, we guessed it, didn't we, fellers?"

The others nodded.

"You guessed it, eh?"

"Oh, we more'n guessed it," with a short laugh. "We wuz reezon'bly shore of et, wuzn't we, fellers?"

Again the others nodded.

"What made you so sure of it?"

"Yer axshuns."

"I don't see how our actions made you think we were 'rebel' spies. What did we do to make you suspicious?"

"Waal, in the furst place, ther two uv ye cum down here, total strangers to us people who live aroun' here."

"Well, that's no crime, is it?"

The man ignored the question.

"Then arter ye got here ye took up yer persishun over on ther bluff, an' ye didn't even tell ennybody yer names nur why ye wuz here nur ennything erbout yerselves."

"Well, what of that? We had a right to do that way if we chose, did we not?"

"Waal, yaas, I guess ye hed er right ter do that way; but et looked mighty suspishus, an' we hed er right ter make up our min's thet ye wuz rebel spies."

"Well, I guess you did have a right to think so if you chose," admitted Bob; "but your thinking so doesn't make it so."

"Mebbe not, but we'll jes' keep on er thinkin' so, ennyway."

"You'll stick to your view, then, right or wrong, eh?"

"Yaas, an' we'll act on 'em, too."

"That means——"

"Thet yer'll properly be shot er hung fer ther rebel spy thet ye air, afore ther sun comes up in ther mornin'!"

This was said in a savage tone; and as Bob looked at the lowering countenances of the four men, he realized that he was in dangerous hands.

The men were Tories of the very worst stripe, and would hesitate at nothing.

CHAPTER III.

DICK'S FIGHT FOR LIFE.

And now, what of Dick?

Was he really dead?

Bob and the four men undoubtedly believed Dick was dead.

When Dick felt himself going over the precipice, he made a desperate effort to catch hold of the edge of the rock and keep from falling to the waters of the bay one hundred feet below.

He failed to catch hold of the edge of the rock.

Instead, his head hit the rock such a hard blow that Dick was rendered unconscious.

How long he remained in this condition, Dick did not know.

At first he scarcely knew anything.

His head was very sore and felt as if it was as big as a bushel basket.

For a few moments he was puzzled.

He could not think where he was or what had happened.

Then suddenly it all came back to him.

He remembered what had taken place.

He and Bob had been stationed on the bluff keeping watch for the return of the British fleet.

He had been asleep while Bob had been taking his turn at watching.

They had been attacked by four men.

There had been a fierce struggle.

He had managed to break loose from the two who had seized him, but in doing so he had lost his balance and fell over the precipice.

He remembered it all very distinctly now.

Then the thought struck him: Where was he?

He was aware that the waters of the bay came right up to the foot of the cliff, immediately beneath the spot where he had fallen over the precipice.

Why, then, had he not fallen into the water?

Dick stirred and began feeling about him.

It was so dark where he was that he could see nothing distinctly.

Turning his head, however, he was enabled to see stretching away from him the blue waters of Delaware Bay.

The water was seemingly a great distance below him, and, while it was dark where Dick was, the moon shining upon the water made it plain to be seen.

Dick's sense of touch told him enough, however.

He made the discovery that he was lying in the midst of a mass of shrubbery.

By reaching out at full length with his right arm, his hand came in contact with what seemed to be a rough and serrated stone wall.

There were clefts and fissures in this wall, and from one of these clefts the bushes or shrubbery had grown out.

The shrubbery was very thick and was twisted and matted together in such a manner as to make it very strong and capable of sustaining considerable weight.

Dick's body had fallen directly into this shrubbery and had lain there during the time the youth was unconscious as snugly and safely almost as a baby in a cradle.

It was wonderful.

The youth's escape from a horrible death seemed almost miraculous.

Dick looked up.

He was sure he could see the top of the precipice.

It could not be more than twenty feet above him, and he did not think it was that far.

But even though it was no farther than this, how was he to reach the top of the cliff?

Dick did not see how he was to accomplish it without aid.

But from whom was he to receive aid?

He thought of Bob, but he remembered the four men who had attacked them and realized that Bob could not possibly have resisted them successfully.

Undoubtedly he had been made a prisoner.

As no sounds came from the top of the cliff, Dick felt sure that the men had made a prisoner of Bob and taken him away.

There was no doubt in Dick's mind that all five believed him to be dead.

Dick feared that the bushes would give way sooner or later.

In order to take the strain off the bushes as much as possible, Dick began to edge in closer to the face of the cliff.

Of course, the farther out he was, the greater would be the strain on the bushes.

As soon as he began to move his body, the bushes began swaying up and down in an alarming manner.

Some of the bushes snapped and cracked as if about to give way.

Dick's heart came up in his throat.

Was he to go to his death in the waters of the bay after all?

He feared that such might prove to be the case.

Slowly and carefully, inch by inch, Dick worked his way in toward the face of the cliff.

Even though he had exercised the utmost care, the bushes cracked and swayed alarmingly.

This diminished to some extent, however, as he drew nearer to the face of the cliff, and finally when he was right against it, they did not crack or sway scarcely at all.

"That makes me feel better," thought Dick; "I guess

these bushes will hold me up now for an indefinite length of time."

His position was not the easiest or most pleasant in the world, however.

He was now situated on the main stems of the bushes, close to the roots, and this made his position uncomfortable.

It was safer, however, and Dick was willing to put up with the inconvenience of it for the sake of the greater security and safety.

Having overcome, temporarily at least, the danger of falling, Dick's thoughts turned in another direction.

He thought of his mother and of his sweetheart, sweet Alice Estabrook.

He thought of those two whom he loved so dearly, and he shuddered when he thought of how near he had come to losing his life.

"It would have almost killed them," he thought.

"Ah! I must not, I will not go down to death in the waters of the bay."

With the thoughts of his mother and sweetheart came new strength and determination to the youth.

He must escape the death which threatened; he would escape it.

But how was he to do it?"

He was confident that if he escaped, he would have to do it unaided.

Suddenly Dick gave a start.

In moving his right hand around, it came in contact with some vines.

The vines were thick and heavy and were clinging close to the face of the cliff.

Dick caught hold of the vines and pulled.

The vines gave slightly, but resisted his efforts to a remarkable degree.

Then Dick grasped the vines with both hands.

Again he pulled at them.

As before they gave way only a very little.

Dick pulled until he actually lifted almost his entire weight, and still the vines held firmly.

A thrill went over the brave youth.

He believed the means of escape lay before him.

His idea was to climb the vines and thus reach the top of the cliff.

He was confident the vines reached that far.

Only the day before he had noticed that a short distance from the tree under which he had at the time been sitting, a heavy growth of vines grew out of the ground on top of the cliff.

He had taken notice of the fact, also, that the vines ran

along the top of the ground and seemingly to the edge of the cliff.

He knew now that the vines not only reached to the edge of the cliff, but over the edge and down the side.

That they reached down many feet, he was certain, for he had not the least doubt that the vines he now had hold of were the lower hanging ends of the vines he had seen growing up on top of the cliff.

If this was true, and he was confident it was, these vines would certainly be capable of holding his weight without being torn loose from their roots.

But could he climb the vines?

Dick felt confident that he could.

At any rate he would try.

He knew that if he escaped it would have to be by his own unaided efforts.

This being the case there was no need of delay.

He might as well begin work at once.

With Dick, to think was to act.

Retaining his hold on the vines, Dick slowly and carefully pulled himself up, first to a sitting posture, and then to his knees.

Then, exercising the greatest care possible, he pulled himself on up until he was standing erect.

His hands were grasping the vines above his head, while his feet rested upon the frail stems of the bushes below.

If his situation was precarious now—and it was—what would it be when he pulled himself up and began trying to climb the vines, his body supported entirely by his hands, his feet having nothing upon which to rest?

This was a question which occurred to Dick, but he did not take time to try to answer it.

He knew it would be a difficult task to climb to the top of the cliff; but no matter.

He had performed many difficult feats in his time, and he would not hesitate at this one, now that his life was at stake.

Dick drew one good, long breath.

He filled his lungs with the pure night air.

Then he began his perilous task.

Slowly and cautiously he pulled his body upward.

His feet left their resting place on the bushes.

The youth hung suspended by his hands alone.

He did not remain stationary, however.

He kept pulling his body up a little at a time, reaching up a little farther with first the right and then the left hand.

It was slow work, and hard work, too.

But Dick was confident he would succeed in reaching

the top of the cliff—that is, providing the vines held and did not tear loose and let him fall into the abyss.

The vines were stretched until they were taut almost as fiddle-strings.

They seemed to be remarkably firm.

But Dick feared that they might become frayed over the sharp rocky edge of the cliff.

In this case they might break and send him down to his death.

He exercised great care, and pulled himself up with as little jerking motion as possible, as an up and down movement of the vines on the edge of the rocks would have a tendency to saw the vines in two.

Careful though he was, Dick could not keep from causing a slight up and down movement of the vines as his weight was transferred from first one hand to the other, and vice versa.

Slowly and steadily Dick made his way upward.

He made as good progress as could have been expected.

He was perhaps two-thirds of the distance to the top of the cliff—two-thirds of the distance from where he had started, of course—when he was given a terrible start.

Suddenly the vines began cracking!

“They are going to give way!” exclaimed Dick half-aloud. “I fear I shall lose my life after all!”

CHAPTER IV.

SAVED.

Dick’s heart almost stopped beating.

It seemed to be up in his throat choking him.

He stopped trying to pull himself up, and hung there motionless.

To his great satisfaction the vines stopped cracking.

This encouraged the youth.

He began to think that he might possibly succeed in reaching the top of the cliff after all.

He would have to be very careful, however.

He would have to pull himself up by inches.

This would be harder on him, on account of the fact that it would take more time, and would cause him much more fatigue, but it was the only safe course.

Again Dick went to work.

Slowly and carefully he pulled himself up.

The vines cracked some, but not so much as they had before.

It was enough to cause cold chills to traverse Dick’s spinal column, however.

He began to fear that he would not succeed in reaching the top of the cliff after all.

He kept up his courage, however, and kept at work.

Slowly but surely he made his way upward.

He was now within perhaps five feet of the top of the cliff.

His hands were closer than this.

Suddenly the vines began cracking again louder than ever.

Dick paused instantly.

He feared that this time sure they would give way and let him drop into the depths below.

When he ceased pulling himself up, the vines ceased cracking so alarmingly.

They kept at it to a certain degree, however.

It was sufficiently so that Dick began to give up hope.

He could feel the vines giving.

To his mind it was only a question of a few minutes before the vines would give way even if he made no effort to climb on up.

If he went ahead trying to pull his body up it might be a question of only a few moments.

The brave youth went ahead, however.

He set his teeth and worked slowly and carefully, yet perseveringly and persistently.

Whether or not Dick would have succeeded in reaching the top of the cliff unaided will always remain an unanswered question.

For he was not left to do it unaided.

He was destined to receive help from an unexpected quarter.

Dick’s head was within four feet of the top of the cliff, and suddenly he heard footsteps.

The footsteps were not heavy, but he heard them distinctly.

“Who is there?” called Dick.

“Thank Heaven!” exclaimed a voice which Dick was sure he recognized. “Whar air ye?”

“I am here,” replied Dick; “just over the edge of the cliff. Can you help me? If you can, please do so quickly, for I am hanging to some vines and they are liable to give way at any moment and let me go to my death!”

An exclamation escaped the lips of the newcomer:

“I kin help ye an’ I will!” came in a determined voice.

“Thank Heaven!” thought Dick. “I may escape yet!”

A few moments later Dick saw a human form outlined against the sky background above him.

The form was, as Dick had expected, that of a woman.

He could see the woman's face with tolerable distinctness, and would easily have recognized her had he not already recognized her by her voice.

She was the woman from whom they had obtained their provisions during the time they had been encamped on top of the promontory.

The woman stood at the very edge of the precipice.

"Be careful!" cautioned Dick. "You might fall over."

"There hain't no danger," she replied; "I hev walked erlong the edge of this cliff hundreds of times, an' I'm not a bit afeerd of falling over."

"But how can you help me?" asked Dick. "You are a woman and——"

"Stout ez any man! Jes' let me git hol' of yer wrists, an' I'll pull ye right up from thar."

"Can you do it?" asked Dick, somewhat dubiously.

The woman laughed.

"Never fear but what I kin," she said. "Ye don't weigh more'n er hundred an' fifty pounds, an' I kin lift thet much, I know."

As the woman was speaking she was reaching downward, and as she finished speaking she grasped Dick by the wrists.

The youth still retained his hold on the vines.

"I am afraid you might become overbalanced," he said. "You had better let me work my way on upward slowly, while you lift just enough to take off strain sufficient to keep the vines from parting."

"Thar hain't no need of thet," the woman assured Dick. "I kin lift ye easy enuff, an' I'm not a bit afeerd of gittin' overbalanced and fallin'."

Somehow Dick had faith in the woman's ability to do as she said she could do.

When he was at the farmhouse he had noticed that the woman was large, bony and strong-looking.

He believed that she would be able to lift him.

"Very well, I will risk it," he said. "Are you ready?"

"Yaas, I'm ready," was the reply.

"Very good; I will loosen my hold on the vines gradually. When I have entirely loosened my hold, I will let you know, and then you can lift me up."

"All right, young man, ye needn't be afeerd but what I kin hol' ye, an' lift ye up, too."

Dick loosened his grasp gradually.

At last his grasp was entirely loosened and he hung there in the grasp of the woman.

Dick felt peculiarly helpless.

His safety depended not upon himself this time, but upon another person, and that person a woman.

What if she should prove unequal to the task of lifting him up onto the top of the cliff!

What if she should lose her balance and both should go plunging headlong to their death in the waters of the bay one hundred feet below!

Dick thought of these things and then he thought of his mother and his sweetheart Alice.

Then in a firm, even tone of voice, he said:

"Now!"

Dick had expected that the woman would tug and pull and gradually draw him up to the edge of the cliff, when he would be enabled to climb on over with her assistance.

He was treated to a surprise, however.

The instant he said, "Now!" the woman suddenly exerted all her strength, and, lifting Dick with as much ease as though he was a bag of bran, deposited him on the top of the promontory, much after the fashion of a fisherman landing a four-pound member of the finny tribe.

Dick leaped to his feet quickly.

He gave utterance to an exclamation of delight.

He seized the woman's hand and pressed it warmly.

"You have saved my life, lady!" he exclaimed. "How can I ever repay you for what you have done for me?"

"I've hed my pay already," the woman said.

It was plain from her tone that she was pleased by Dick's action.

"I don't understand. What do you mean by saying you have already been paid?"

"Whut do I mean?"

"Yes; in what way have you been paid?"

"I have saved my husband from bein' er murderer!"

The woman spoke in low, sad, but intense tones.

"Ah!" breathed Dick. "I understand. Your husband was one of the four who attacked my friend and myself."

"Yaas; he wuz one uv 'em. I tried to keep him frum doin' et, but couldn't. I kep' thinkin' an' thinkin' arter they hed left the house, an' finerally I c'u'dn't stan' et enny longer, an' so I kim up here ter see whut they wuz goin' ter do with yer. I didn't see nobuddy aroun' an' I thort I wuz too late. I wuz erbout to start to go back when I heard ye call. Thet's all. Yer know ther rest."

"You have saved my life, lady, and I shall never forget it," said Dick, earnestly. "If the time ever comes when I can do something to repay you, rest assured that I will do it."

"Thar is only one thing I would ask uv ye, young man, an' thet is, thet ef ever et happens thet ye kin keep my husband frum bein' killed, ye'll do et. I know he hain't ther best man in ther world, but he's my husband, an' ther

hain't nobuddy else in ther world thet I keer fur er thet keers fur me."

There was a sad cadence to the woman's tone that touched Dick's heart.

"That would be very little to do in return for what you have done for me, lady," said Dick, promptly. "And rest assured that if I have the opportunity to do you this favor, I certainly shall do it."

"Oh, thank ye, thank ye!"

Dick's thoughts now turned to Bob.

That his friend had been captured he was certain.

One of his captors—the leader, in fact—was the husband of this woman.

Dick knew this, and wondered if the woman would be willing to aid him by giving information as to the whereabouts of the four.

"I'll find out," he said to himself.

Then aloud he asked:

"I fear my friend has been captured by your husband and his three companions. Do you have any idea where they can be found—or would you tell me if you did know?"

"Yes, I would tell ye," was the prompt reply. "I don't know fur sartin whur they kin be found, but I hev a purty good idee whar they air."

"Then tell me quickly, please. They might do my friend an injury. And, if possible, I wish to rescue him before they do do something of that kind."

"I kain't tell ye very well whar ther place is, but I kin show ye."

"That will do nicely; is it far?"

"Not very fur. Et won't take long to walk et."

"Come then; let us be going."

Dick and the woman set out.

"Do you know why your husband and the other men attacked us?" asked Dick as they walked along.

"Yaas," was the reply.

"Why, then, did they do it?"

"They thort ye two wuz rebel spies."

"Thought we were 'rebel' spies?"

"Yaas."

"Then your husband and those men are Tories?"

"Yaas, they're Tories. Thar air lots uv Tories 'roun' heer."

"What made them think we were 'rebel' spies?"

"They judged ye wuz by the way ye acted."

"Oh, that was it."

The woman took the lead as she knew the way, while Dick did not.

After a brisk walk of perhaps twenty minutes they reached the timber.

Entering a path they made their way along it for quite a distance.

Presently they paused at the edge of a glade.

In the centre of this open space was a log cabin.

A faint light streamed out through the open doorway.

"One uv ther men who wuz with my husband lives in thet cabin," the woman said; "an' I think ye'll fin' all four uv 'em in thar."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick; "and if they are there my friend is there. I thank you ever so much for having guided me hither."

"Ye air welcome," the woman said. "I don't see, though, whut good it is goin' to do ye; ye air only one, an' whut kin ye do ag'inst four?"

"That remains to be seen, lady," was the quiet reply. "I shall, of course, use strategy, if possible, in trying to rescue my friend; but if worst comes to the worst, and it becomes necessary to do so, I will fight all four of them."

"Ye wouldn't dare do et; ye would surely be killed!"

"I will risk it, lady."

After a little further conversation the woman said that she must be going.

"My husband must not know thet I saved yer life an' showed ye the way heer," she said. "So I will go home. Be keerful not ter git hurt; but ef ye do git inter er fight, an' kin do so, pleeze spare ther life uv my husband."

"I will do so, lady."

The woman then bade him good-by and took her departure.

"Now," said Dick to himself, "I will see if those men are in the cabin and if they have Bob there a prisoner."

Dick walked around, keeping in the edge of the timber until opposite the end of the cabin, and then he stole forward across the open space.

Reaching the end of the cabin he paused.

The cabin was made of rough logs.

The cracks between the logs were "chinked" with mud.

The mud, on drying, had shrunk, and in many places had become loose.

Dick felt around, and, getting hold of a loose piece of the "chinking," carefully removed it.

This left a space an inch and a half wide by a foot in length, through which he could look and get a good view of the cabin.

Dick applied his eyes to the opening.

The woman had been right.

The four men were in the cabin.

Bob was there also.

And he was a prisoner.

His hands were tied together behind his back, and he was seated on a split-log bench.

His back was toward Dick, and the four men were standing facing the youth and likewise facing Dick.

As Dick heard what was being said, he realized that he had not arrived any too soon.

"Ye air er rebel spy, young feller," Dick heard one of the men say; "ye air er traitor ter yer king, an' deserve death; so we hev decided ter take ye out an' string ye up!"

CHAPTER V.

RESCUED.

There was no doubt at all but what the man was in deadly earnest.

His tone proved that.

But Bob never flinched.

He looked the man straight in the face.

"I am not a traitor!" Bob said; "for I acknowledge no king. I am a patriot, true; I am one who believes that the people of America should be free; and they will be free, I am confident. Of course you can hang me, and I cannot help myself, but you will be committing murder for very little profit to yourselves or anybody else!"

"Glorious old Bob!" thought Dick. "They can't frighten him."

"Bring him along, fellers. We'll string him up, an' thar will be one rebel spy less, anyway."

A couple of the men seized Bob, and, lifting him to his feet, started to drag him out of the cabin.

"Hold on!" cried Bob, in a voice of mingled anger and dignity. "You need not jerk me around so roughly; I'll walk quietly along with you if you will give me a chance."

The men ceased handling him so roughly then, and holding to Bob's arms allowed him to walk quietly along.

Leaving the cabin, the four men with Bob in their midst made their way across the open space to a point where a large oak tree stood alone perhaps twenty feet from the timber proper.

They paused beneath the outspreading branches of this tree.

One of the men had brought a rope from the cabin.

In one end of this rope he rigged a running noose.

This noose he threw over a large limb which grew out from the main body of the tree at a distance of perhaps twelve feet from the ground.

If Bob had thought of trying to make a break for lib-

erty—and no doubt he had thought of trying to do so—he was forced to give up the idea, for the two men kept tight hold upon his arms.

Seizing the loose end of the rope as it came down, the man who had thrown it over the limb, placed the noose around Bob's neck and adjusted it carefully.

Meanwhile Dick had not been inactive.

As the four men with their prisoner were making their way across to where the tree stood, Dick hastened back to the edge of the timber, keeping the cabin between himself and the Tories.

Once within the protection of the timber, Dick made his way around in a half-circle, and paused just within the edge of the timber, and only a few yards distant from the Tories and their prisoner.

Dick's blood boiled with anger as he saw the fellows adjusting the noose around Bob's neck.

"The scoundrels!" he exclaimed to himself; "they think they are going to hang Bob; but they are not, not if I can help it. I will defeat their plans and save Bob's life, or I will die with him!"

And Dick meant it.

He had already made his plans.

He had made up his mind to play a trick upon them that he and Bob had on former occasions played upon the British with success.

He drew his pistols, and, cocking them, held them ready in his hands.

He waited until the men had adjusted the noose round Bob's neck and taken hold of the end of the rope.

Dick was a good judge of human nature.

He knew that when the men had begun pulling on the rope, when the last supreme moment was near at hand, their nerves would be on a greater strain, and it would be easier to startle them than at any other time.

So he waited until the men began to pull, and then suddenly he gave vent to as loud and as startling a yell as it was possible for him to utter.

"Come on, boys, we've got them now!" he cried. "Kill the scoundrels! Shoot them down!"

Crack, crack!

Dick fired one pistol, then the other.

He did not fire to kill, but he did try to hit the fellows. They had shown themselves to be merciless scoundrels, and he felt that they deserved death.

Following the shots came two blood-curdling yells from two of the Tories.

Dick's shots had taken effect.

"Oh, I'm killed!" howled one.

"I'm a dead man!" from another.

The exceedingly lively manner in which they fled from the spot disproved their statements, however.

No dead men, or even mortally wounded ones could have run like they were running.

"Come on, boys!" again cried Dick, as he leaped forward; "we've got the scoundrels now! Come ahead!"

All four had let go of the rope the instant Dick had uttered the yell, and as soon as the pistol-shots were fired all four took to their heels like the arrant cowards they were.

Dick believed he had given them such a scare that they would not soon stop running.

This suited him perfectly.

All he cared for was to effect Bob's release.

He made no attempt to accelerate the speed of the four Tories by frightening them still further.

Instead he stopped, and, taking the noose from around Bob's neck, cut the rope binding his arms.

"Dick! Is it you?" cried Bob.

His tone fairly thrilled Dick with delight.

"Yes, it is me, old man!"

"Great guns, but I am glad, Dick. "I thought you were dead. I never expected to see you alive again after you took that tumble over the cliff."

"But I am all right, Bob; alive and well, as you see."

"How did you escape?" he asked, eagerly.

"I'll tell you some other time, Bob. Just now, I think we had better be getting away from here. Those scoundrels might come back."

"I don't think there's much danger, Dick," with a chuckle; "you gave them such a scare that I don't think they will venture back in a hurry."

"Perhaps not. But we will get away from here, anyway, and not take any chances."

"All right, Dick; I don't fancy this place myself any too well," with a shrug of the shoulders, and a suggestive glance up at the limb over which the rope had been thrown.

The youths at once set out.

"Come, then."

They entered the path which they had traversed in reaching the cabin, and made their way along at a rapid pace.

They kept a sharp lookout, for they thought it possible that they might encounter the four Tories.

They saw nothing of the Tories, however, and soon reached the edge of the timber.

Just as they were about to step out into the open, they found themselves confronted by a woman.

It was the woman who had saved Dick's life.

She greeted the youths pleasantly, and seemed delighted

because of the fact that Dick had succeeded in rescuing his friend.

She had heard the pistol-shots and was anxious regarding her husband.

Dick reassured her and told her that he did not think her husband had been injured.

Fearing that her husband and his companions might appear, the woman did not talk to Dick and Bob very long.

She bade them good-by and made her way in the direction of her home, while Dick and Bob made their way back toward their lookout station on the promontory overlooking Delaware Bay.

The youths breathed a sigh of relief when they reached their quarters.

"Well, here we are again, Dick," said Bob, in a lively tone.

No one to have heard him would have thought that he had just had a narrow escape from being hanged.

But that was Bob up and down.

Personal danger to himself never had much effect on Bob, even at the time, and after the danger was over and he was safe again, Bob usually dismissed the matter without more ado.

"Yes, we're here again, Bob, safe and sound. I suppose there is no danger of those fellows attacking us again."

"I hardly think so, Dick. Perhaps we both had better stay awake and keep a lookout for the fellows, however. It will not be long till daylight, anyway."

"True, Bob. But what about Admiral Howe's fleet? Do you suppose it has slipped past while we have been having our little trouble?"

"I hardly think so, Dick. How long has it been since we were attacked by those men, do you think?"

"I don't know, Bob. I was unconscious part of the time, and could not even give a guess."

"Unconscious?"

"Yes; after I went over the cliff, you know. So you can give a better guess as to the length of time that has elapsed than I can."

"Well, I should say it has been not to exceed an hour and a half, and as no ships were in sight at that time, I do not think they could have gotten past and out of sight up the river in such a short space of time."

"I hardly think so, Bob. But it is strange that the fleet did not return, don't you think?"

"I do think so, Dick. I don't understand it at all."

"Well, we will keep close watch till morning, and if

they try to sail up the Delaware we will see them and will carry the news to General Washington post haste."

"By the way, Dick," said Bob; "how in the world did you escape death when you went over the precipice? I saw you go over and made up my mind that I would never see you again."

"I hardly know how I escaped myself, Bob," replied Dick; and then he went ahead and told Bob the whole story.

Bob uttered exclamations of wonderment.

When Dick had finished the story of his miraculous escape, Bob made his way to the brink of the precipice and looked down.

"Great guns, Dick! What a wonderful escape you did have! Your body wouldn't be caught and held up by that little patch of bushes again, once in a hundred times!"

"I guess you're right, old man. Take care that you don't tumble over!"

Bob drew back from the brink of the precipice, and the two sat down under the tree.

They talked on various subjects, but kept a sharp lookout both for the British fleet and for the four Tories.

They thought it possible that the fellows might attack them again.

The Tories did not put in an appearance, however, nor did the British fleet come within the range of their vision.

The youths thought that perhaps they might sight the British warships when daylight came.

But when the sun came up no British ships were in sight.

The youths were surprised.

They were puzzled as well.

They could not understand it.

What had become of the British fleet?

The youths asked themselves this question, but could not answer it.

They were sure the fleet would appear some time during the day, however, and they waited and watched all day long.

The fleet did not appear.

They kept watch all night, taking turns as they had done the night before—and being careful to keep a sharp lookout for the Tories as well.

Still the British fleet did not appear.

Next morning the youths held a council.

They decided that it was time they were returning to General Washington and informing him of the state of affairs.

They felt that he should be put in possession of the knowledge of the queer action of the British fleet.

The strange move by the British might portend some stroke of importance, and General Washington, than whom no shrewder man lived, might be able to figure out what it meant.

So the youths decided to start at once for the headquarters of the patriot army.

It was a long and hard day's ride, as the youths knew from experience, so after having made up their minds, they lost no time in making the start.

The youths rode steadily, and had covered about half the distance by noon.

They were beginning to feel the need of food and had decided to stop at the first house they came to and get something to eat as well as feed for their horses.

Suddenly, after having emerged from a strip of timber bordering a small stream, they found themselves opposite a gateway opening into grounds surrounded by a high stone wall. In the centre of the grounds, which were several acres in extent, was a good-sized mansion. Just within the gateway stood a beautiful maiden of apparently about eighteen years of age.

The youths rode up to the gateway and Dick leaped to the ground.

Doffing his hat, he bowed gracefully and politely, and, addressing the young lady, said:

"We are very hungry, miss; do you suppose we could get food at the house yonder?"

"I am sure that you can," with a smile. "Will you enter, young sirs?" the beautiful maiden asked. "My father will be pleased to extend hospitality to any persons wearing the uniforms of patriot soldiers."

CHAPTER VI.

TRAPPED.

"Indeed we will, and thank you," replied Dick, promptly.

"Come," said the girl.

Bob leaped to the ground, and he and Dick followed up the winding driveway, walking and leading their horses.

They paused when they reached the mansion.

Their approach had evidently been seen, for a servant came out upon the piazza as they drew near.

"Take the young gentlemen's horses, Sam," the girl ordered. "Take them to the barn and give them feed and water."

The servant bowed, and, taking the halter straps out of the youths' hands, led the horses away.

The girl ran up the piazza steps lightly and the youths followed her.

Opening the door she led the way into the house.

They found themselves in a large, roomy hall.

The girl opened a door at the left-hand side, and said:

"Enter and take seats. I will send my father down immediately."

The youths bowed and entered the room, while the girl ran lightly upstairs.

The youths found themselves in a handsomely-furnished room.

It was evidently the library, as the walls were lined with books.

The youths sat down and looked about them with interest.

"This is all right, eh, Dick?" smiled Bob.

"It looks so, Bob."

"I guess we will be able to get something to eat here."

"I think so."

Perhaps ten minutes passed.

Then steps were heard in the hall.

Next moment a man of about forty-five years of age entered the room.

He was a handsome man, with an aristocratic bearing.

He advanced and bowed in an extremely graceful manner.

"My daughter informed me that a couple of young gentlemen were here and that they craved my hospitality," the man said, pleasantly. "I am pleased to meet you; and will say that no one ever seeks hospitality at the hands of Dudley Radcliffe in vain."

The youths rose and bowed in return.

"Thank you, sir," said Dick. "We have ridden far, and are indeed, as we told your daughter, tired and hungry, and we shall be greatly pleased to accept of your hospitality."

"My name is David Martin, Mr. Radcliffe, and my companion here is Samuel Somers."

"I am pleased to know you, young gentlemen."

Dick was an extremely cautious youth.

He never liked to take unnecessary chances, or run unnecessary risks.

He had no way of knowing whether or not Mr. Radcliffe was a patriot.

For aught the youth knew to the contrary, the man might be a Tory.

In that case it would be better that he should not know the identity of his visitors.

And for that reason Dick had given fictitious names for himself and Bob.

He thought it possible if the man was a Tory he might have heard of Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, and, knowing them to be patriot spies, might try to detain them or even to effect their capture, whereas, if he thought them merely a couple of ordinary patriot soldiers, he might not attempt to interfere with them in any way.

Mr. Radcliffe took a seat and engaged the youths in conversation.

He proved himself to be a clever talker and a good entertainer.

He talked of other things than the war.

By so doing he kept the youths in ignorance regarding whether or not he was a patriot.

Had he talked on the subject of the war, the youths would doubtless have been enabled to give a shrewd guess as to which side had his sympathies.

But, whether intentionally or not, the man avoided the subject, and they were left in the dark.

Perhaps half an hour passed.

Then the beautiful girl who had conducted them to the mansion entered the room.

"Dinner is ready, papa," she said.

"Very well, my dear," said Mr. Radcliffe, rising. "Elsie, this young gentleman is Mr. David Martin, and this one Mr. Samuel Somers. Gentlemen, my daughter, Elsie."

The youths had risen at the same time as Mr. Radcliffe and they bowed gracefully.

The beautiful maiden bowed in acknowledgment of the introduction, and smiled in a bewitching manner.

"I am pleased to make the acquaintance of Mr. Martin and Mr. Somers," she said, in a sweet voice.

"To say that we are pleased to make the acquaintance of Miss Radcliffe is altogether too mild a statement to cover the real facts in the case," said Dick, in such an earnest and expressive manner as to cause the girl to blush slightly and look somewhat confused.

"Come," said Mr. Radcliffe; "dinner is getting cold."

He led the way from the room, the others following, Dick having given his arm to Elsie, and Bob bringing up the rear.

They were soon in the dining room and seated at the table.

The food was well-cooked and plentiful, and the youths enjoyed the meal immensely.

The youths decided that Mr. Radcliffe must be a winner, as there was no woman present, and Elsie played the part of hostess.

As the meal was nearing an end, Dick caught Elsie

looking at him once or twice, in what he considered a peculiar manner.

He almost fancied there was a pitying look in the beautiful eyes of the girl.

"What could it mean?" he asked himself.

He decided that it did not mean anything—that he must have been mistaken.

So he dismissed the matter from his mind.

But he was destined to learn that it did mean something.

A few minutes later he felt a peculiar drowsy sensation stealing over him.

He began to feel very sleepy.

He wondered what could be the cause of this.

He looked at Bob, and to his surprise, saw that his comrade looked as if he was half-asleep.

Dick could not think what was the matter.

The drowsy feeling grew in strength an intensity.

Dick tried to shake it off, but could not.

Again he looked at Bob, and saw that his friend's head was nodding.

Suddenly a thought came to Dick.

It was a startling thought.

Had he and Bob been drugged!

Was Mr. Radcliffe a Tory?

Was the beautiful maiden, Elsie, a Tory also, and had she led them into a trap?

He feared so.

He looked at Mr. Radcliffe.

There was a smile of triumph on the man's face.

The look made Dick satisfied that he was right in his suspicions.

The man was a Tory.

He had had them inveigled into the house, and had caused drugs to be placed in their food.

They were in a trap!

Then Dick looked at Elsie.

The beautiful girl was looking at him intently.

There was, Dick was sure, a look of pity and sorrow in the beautiful eyes of the girl.

He realized this, and then of a sudden all became a blur in front of his eyes.

Dick was a youth with an iron will.

He had fought off the drowsy sensation by exerting the full force of his will power.

But now he could fight it off no longer, and was forced to succumb.

Everything became blurry, and then dark, and Dick's head sank forward upon the table.

A few moments later he was entirely unconscious.

Bob had been so for nearly a minute.

Mr. Radcliffe rang a bell.

Four men entered the dining room.

Mr. Radcliffe pointed to the two unconscious youths.

"We have trapped them," he said in a tone of great satisfaction. "Those youths thought to fool me by giving me fictitious names, but thanks to the information which we had, to the effect that Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, the two notorious rebel boy spies, were in this part of the country, and would pass this way to-day, I was not deceived. I am confident that they are the youths in question, and I know that General Howe will be delighted to know that they have been captured. We will make them prisoners and keep them here until we learn the whereabouts of, and can communicate with, General Howe, and then, if he wishes it, we will turn the prisoners over to him. Take them to the room in the cellar, which we have prepared for their reception."

"Oh, papa, what if you have made a mistake, after all!" said Elsie.

"I hardly think it possible, Elsie," her father replied. "We had information to the effect that those rebel boy spies would pass this way, and these two youths, wearing the uniform of Continental soldiers, put in an appearance. They are certainly the youths in question. Take them away, men."

Two of the men seized Dick, while the other two took hold of Bob, and the youths were carried from the room.

They were borne along a short passageway and then down a flight of stairs into a large roomy cellar.

They made their way to the farthest corner.

In this corner a good-sized room had been built.

The walls were of stone, the same as the walls proper of the cellar, thus proving that the room had been built at the same time that the house was built.

All four of the walls of the room being of stone, would make it an ideal place for a prison for the youths, as it would be practically impossible for them to get out even though their hands should be free.

The men carried the unconscious youths into this room, and deposited them on the floor.

The fellows were evidently so sure of the strength of the prison, that they did not think it necessary to bind the hands of the prisoners.

Leaving the room they closed the door and locked it.

The door was a strong affair, and there was no doubt but that it would resist all attempt at breaking it down.

The men had made their way back upstairs and to the dining room.

"Have you put them in the room and locked the door?" asked Mr. Radcliffe.

"Yes, sir," replied one of the men.

"Very good. Now sit down and have some dinner."

The men obeyed.

"They had not recovered consciousness before you left?"

Mr. Radcliffe asked.

"No," was the reply.

"Did you tie their hands?"

"No; we didn't think it necessary. They couldn't get out of there."

"I guess you're right about that. Well, this has been a good day's work."

"I should say so, sir."

"Yes; the capture of those two rebel spies will prove of more value to our cause than the capture of a whole regiment of common soldiers."

The four men and Mr. Radcliffe kept up the conversation while the men were eating their dinner, and, leaving them thus, we will return to Dick and Bob.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK AND BOB SURPRISED.

Dick and Bob did not long remain unconscious.

Fifteen minutes from the time that they had been left on the floor of the cellar, they began to stir.

A few minutes later they opened their eyes.

Then they sat up and looked at each other in an inquiring manner.

There was still a half-dazed look on their faces.

Then they looked around the room.

At one side, close under the floor, was a small window heavily barred.

It admitted sufficient light so that they could see their surroundings with tolerable distinctness.

Bob was the first to speak.

"What does it mean, Dick?" he asked. "Where are we, anyway?"

"I don't know where we are, Bob," replied Dick; "but I know what has happened, don't you?"

"I hardly know," was the hesitating reply. "Let's see; we were eating dinner, were we not?"

"Yes; with Mr. Radcliffe and his beautiful daughter."

"I remember; and I remember that all of a sudden I became very drowsy."

"It was the same with me, Bob."

"Was it?"

"Yes."

"What caused it, Dick?"

"We were drugged."

"Drugged?"

"Yes."

"By Mr. Radcliffe?"

"Well, in accordance with his orders. One of the servants no doubt put the drug in the food."

"Then Mr. Radcliffe must be——"

"A Tory, Bob."

"I see; and he must be one of the big wigs among the Tories, too, if I am any judge."

"He undoubtedly must be, Bob. But what puzzles me is, why he should wish to make us prisoners. I should not have thought he would care about being bothered with a couple of ordinary patriot soldiers."

"Maybe he knows who we really are, Dick."

"Maybe so, Bob. Come to think of it, I imagine there was a peculiar look on his face when I gave him those fictitious names."

"I thought I noticed something of the kind, too. I believe that he knew who we were all the time; in fact, it would not surprise me to learn that they had advance information regarding our coming, and that the girl was stationed at the gate for the especial purpose of leading us into this trap."

"It looks as if you were right, Bob; still, I hate to think that such a sweet and beautiful girl would render assistance in such an affair."

"She's sweet enough and pretty enough, Dick; but you know there's an old saying, 'Like father, like son,' and doubtless it will apply to a daughter as well as to a son. Her father being a Tory, naturally she would be a Tory, too."

"Judging by what has happened, you must be right, Bob. Still I don't believe that if the girl had any idea that harm was to come to us, she would aid or abet her father in the affair."

"Well, she has already done the work, Dick, and the result is that we have been neatly trapped."

"We are trapped, Bob; there is no doubt about that, but perhaps we may succeed in escaping from the trap."

"Maybe so; but it looks like a pretty stout one; I am afraid we will have hard work escaping from it."

"Let's take a look about the room, anyway, Bob, and see what chance there is for getting out of here."

The youths rose to their feet.

They were slightly dizzy, but otherwise felt as well as ever.

"I wonder what kind of a drug that was that they used on us, Dick?"

"I don't know. It was powerful, but not lasting in effect. It surely has not been long since we became unconscious."

"I don't think it has been very long."

The youths made their way here and there about the room.

They examined it carefully, paying strict attention to the windows and to the door.

"We are in the cellar, Bob," said Dick.

"Yes," grimly; "and I judge from the looks of things that we will stay here awhile."

"It does look that way. Those bars in the window seem to have been put there to stay, and the door is as solid as a rock."

"Right; this room seems well-suited for use as a jail."

Having satisfied themselves that there was no possible chance of escaping from the room, the youths decided to make matters as easy as possible.

They sat down at one side of the room and leaned their backs against the wall.

"What I hate worse than anything else about this, Bob, is that we will be delayed in getting to General Washington with the news of the movement of the British fleet," said Dick.

"That's right," agreed Bob. "That is the bad feature about the affair."

Neither youth thought of the danger which threatened them should they be held prisoners, and eventually be turned over to General Howe. They would no doubt be shot or hung, but they gave this matter no thought.

This was characteristic of them, however.

All that worried them was the thought that they might not be able to carry to General Washington their report regarding the strange action of the British fleet.

They sat there and talked, and slowly the afternoon wore away.

The youths kept hoping that some one would come down to see how they were getting along.

In that case they intended to feign unconsciousness and lay upon the person whoever he might be and overpower him.

But no one put in an appearance until late in the evening.

Such a long time had elapsed that the youths knew it would be useless to pretend to be unconscious.

They rose to their feet, however, when they heard footsteps approaching.

They made up their minds that if they got half a chance, they would overpower their visitor and escape from the place.

As soon as the door opened they saw it would be useless to attempt to do anything, for not one man but four appeared.

One carried a tray on which was some food, another carried a couple of candles, while the other two each held a pistol in their hand.

The youths looked at the four with interest.

They did not remember ever having seen them before.

Dick was determined to secure some information if possible.

"What does this mean?" he asked; "why have we been made prisoners in this fashion?"

"You'll have to ask somebody else," said one of the fellows with a grin; "I can't tell you."

"You mean you won't tell me."

The fellow grinned again.

"Maybe that is it," he said.

But Dick persisted.

"How long do you suppose we will be kept here?" he asked.

"I can't say."

Dick saw there was no use trying to get satisfaction out of those fellows.

As an afterthought he told the men as they were starting away to tell Mr. Radcliffe he wished to see him.

"I'll tell him," was the reply; "but I can't say whether he will come and see you or not."

The men took their departure, locking the door behind them.

"Do you think he will come, Dick?" asked Bob, when the men had gone.

"I don't know, Bob; I hope he will, though; I would like to ask him a few questions."

"Well, we'll have to wait and see, anyhow, so we might as well put in our time eating. I'm somewhat hungry, anyway; how about you?"

"I can eat some, I guess, Bob."

The youths were about to begin eating when a thought struck Bob, and he looked at Dick quickly.

"Say, do you suppose this food is drugged, Dick?" he asked, half-fearfully.

"Oh, I hardly think so; it would not benefit them any to drug us again; we're already prisoners, you know."

"That's so."

Bob's tone was slightly dubious, however, and he minced at the food and tested it by tasting of it carefully before eating of it in a manner that caused Dick to smile.

He had no fears that the food was drugged, and ate heartily.

"Eat all you can, Bob," he advised; "we may get a chance to escape to-night, and in that case we will have need of all the strength that food can supply."

Bob did not eat as much as Dick, but managed to make a very good meal of it.

The youths finished their supper and waited for Mr. Radcliffe to put in an appearance.

They waited in vain.

Mr. Radcliffe did not visit them.

The youths were somewhat disappointed, but were not surprised.

They sat and talked for several hours.

They discussed their situation from every standpoint.

The men who had brought the food left a candle.

At last the candle burned out, and the youths were left in darkness.

They talked awhile longer, and then becoming sleepy, they threw themselves down upon the hard floor, and, in spite of the fact that their situation was anything but comfortable, they managed to get to sleep.

How long they had been asleep they could not tell, but it must have been several hours later when they were awakened by the rattling of the key in the lock on the door.

The youths were on the alert instantly.

They sat up and listened eagerly.

Who could be coming to see them at this time of night, and why was he coming?

They heard the key turn and then the door opened slowly.

They knew the door was open because of the fact that a streak of light entered the room and grew gradually wider and wider.

The youths watched eagerly to see who it was that was about to enter.

They were to be treated to a surprise.

Suddenly the person stepped through the doorway and stood within the room.

The person was Elsie Radcliffe, the beautiful Tory!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEAUTIFUL TORY'S BRAVE ACT.

An exclamation of amazement escaped both youths.

"Miss Radcliffe!" they cried in unison.

The girl held up her hand warningly.

"Sh!" she said; "don't speak so loudly; we may be heard."

Turning, she pushed the door to.

"Why have you come here, Miss Radcliffe?" asked Dick.

"I have come to set you free," was the prompt but low spoken reply.

"To set us free?"

"Yes."

"But I thought you were one of the main ones responsible for our being here," said Dick, half-questioningly.

The girl blushed and looked confused.

"So I was," she admitted; "but I—didn't know—who I was—that is, I——" the girl broke down in evident confusion.

If they understood what the girl really meant, they gave no sign.

The truth of the matter was, that Mr. Radcliffe, who was quite wealthy and influential, was loyal to King George and was looked upon as a leader of the Tory element in that portion of New Jersey. He had done considerable aid the king's cause, and had been instrumental in causing a great many men to join the British army.

He was personally acquainted with General Howe, having visited him at New Brunswick and New York on several occasions. In this way he had come to know all about Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, the patriot boy spies.

He knew that General Howe had offered a reward for the youth, and realizing that the general would be greatly pleased to learn that the boy spies had been captured, he had, when the opportunity came his way, made up his mind to capture the youths. He usually had several men out on spying expeditions, and in some manner some of these men learned that Dick and Bob had been sent down the south coast of New Jersey on a spying expedition. They had been out on a scouting expedition that forenoon, and at about ten o'clock he had caught sight of Dick and Bob coming toward him on horseback. Suspecting who they were, he returned and rode rapidly back to Mr. Radcliffe and told Mr. Radcliffe what he had seen, and as they knew that the road the youths were traveling would lead them past the house, they laid their plans to capture the boys.

Elsie had been taken into their confidence, and had agreed to help them.

Her part of the work was to be in the line of decoy work.

She was to stand at the gateway and get the youths to enter by telling them that her father would be glad to extend hospitality to them. As the reader knows, she did her part well. But when she had seen what bright, handsome fellows the "rebel" spies were, she had taken a liking to them and to Dick especially, and had deeply regretted her part she had played in the affair.

Dick had not misinterpreted the look which he had seen in the girl's eyes after he had been drugged at the dinner table. Elsie had indeed looked at him pityingly and

rowfully, and when the youths had been carried downstairs into the cellar, much after the fashion of bags of potatoes, she made up her mind that she would free the youths and risk her father's displeasure.

The knowledge of this as given above was gained by the youths as a result of the conversation which they had with Elsie there in the room in the corner of the cellar.

"I fear you are risking a good deal for us, Miss Radcliffe," said Dick. "Your father will be very angry should he learn that you set us free."

"I will risk it," the girl said with a smile. "I could never again rest easy if I allowed you to remain prisoners here after the part I took in causing you to be brought here."

"That is all right," said Dick. "You have more than evened the matter up by coming here to set us free; we owe you more than we will ever be able to repay."

"No, no; if you will consider that I have evened up the account, I shall be more than satisfied."

"Well, you have more than done that."

The girl's face brightened at this, and then suddenly it became clouded.

She looked at Dick earnestly, and, he thought, beseechingly.

"What is it, Miss Radcliffe?" asked Dick, who saw there was something on her mind.

"My father—if I could only hope that no trouble would come to him as a result of my setting you free, I should be perfectly happy."

"You may rest easy on that score," Dick assured her; "I promise you that for your sake no harm shall come to your father as a result of your action in freeing us."

"Oh, thank you!" the girl said, earnestly. "And now, we had better be going."

"We are ready and glad to go," replied Dick.

At this instant the sound of voices and trampling footsteps was heard.

"Goodness!" the girl exclaimed. "It is papa and some of the men. I fear you will not succeed in making your escape after all."

But Dick was determined to escape.

"Yes, we will!" he declared, in a low, determined tone. "Come out of here quickly!"

He led the way out of the room into the cellar proper, Bob and Elsie following.

Then he locked the door and tossed the key into the corner.

Taking the candle out of Elsie's hand, he extinguished it.

"Come!" he said in a low tone; "we will get under the

stairs, and then, as soon as those men have descended and started to cross the cellar, we will try to slip upstairs. Their backs will be toward us, and they may not see us."

They succeeded in getting under the stairway just as the door leading down into the cellar opened.

Then came the sound of trampling feet on the stairway above the heads of Dick, Bob, and Elsie.

The girl was trembling violently, and Dick, who had taken hold of her hand to lead her across the cellar in the darkness, pressed the hand reassuringly.

The men were talking about the "rebel" spies, and Dick learned from their conversation that they were coming to take himself and Bob away to some place that was considered more suitable as a prison.

The men were soon at the bottom of the stairs and making their way slowly across the cellar toward the room in the corner.

One of the men carried a candle, which did not, of course, give a great deal of light, and as the candle was held in front of him the space behind them was quite dark.

Dick nudged Bob, who understood, and stole out from his hiding-place and around and up the stairs, Dick and Elsie following closely.

They made no more noise than so many ghosts, and they succeeded in reaching the top of the stairs by the time the men reached the door of the room in which Dick and Bob had been confined.

Bob and Elsie passed through the doorway in safety, but Dick, unfortunately, stumbled and made noise sufficient to attract the attention of the men, who uttered exclamations and came running back toward the stairway.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE.

Dick leaped through the doorway and closed the door.

They were in the kitchen as they could see by the light of a candle on a table at one side of the room.

Dick's quick eye caught sight of a bolt on the door, and he pushed it across and into its socket quickly.

"There! I don't think they will get out of the cellar right away," he said, grimly.

Then he turned to Elsie and whispered.

"Leave us instantly and hasten to your room before some one sees you with us. I don't want you to get into any trouble on our account. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" whispered the girl; and then, pointing to a door at the opposite side of the room, she went on:

"That door opens out into the back yard. The stable is straight ahead as you go out, and perhaps you may be able to get your horses and make your escape. Two or three men sleep at the barn, however, and you will have to be careful not to awaken them."

"Yes, yes, we will!" whispered Dick. "Thank you for the information and for your kindness. I hope that we may some time meet again. Good-by!"

"I hope so!" whispered the girl, her voice trembling. "Good-by!"

The girl opened the door and passed through into the hall, while Dick and Bob crossed the room and unlocked and opened the door leading to the yard.

They quickly passed through the doorway and closed the door behind them.

It was moonlight and they could see the stable plainly.

The youths hastened toward it.

They reached the door, and, opening it, entered the stable.

The door of the stable was toward the moon, and the interior of the stable was lighted sufficiently so the youths could see with reasonable distinctness.

They saw and recognized their horses.

The animals happened to be in stalls near the door.

The saddles and bridles were hanging up on pegs fastened to the wall at points opposite the stalls occupied by the horses.

The youths seized the saddles and bridles and put them on the horses.

Dick remembered what the girl had said about there being men in the stable, and he and Bob made as little noise as possible.

They could not help making a little noise, however, and as they were leading the horses out of the stable they were startled by hearing a cry of:

"Stop, thieves! Stop, or we will shoot you full of holes!"

The command had the opposite effect from what was intended.

The youths did not stop.

Instead they hastened their movements.

They hurriedly led their horses out and were about to mount, when they found themselves confronted by a new danger.

The outside cellar door suddenly flew open, and four or five men came rushing up out of the cellar.

They saw Dick and Bob instantly.

"There they are!" cried a voice which the youths recog-

nized as being that of Mr. Radcliffe. "Don't let them escape! Shoot them dead, if necessary!"

Then the man addressed the youths directly.

"Hold!" he cried. "Don't try to escape! You are dead men if you make the attempt!"

But the youths were not to be stopped so easily.

Having made such headway, they would now escape or die in the attempt.

They uttered not a word in reply to Mr. Radcliffe's challenge, but leaped into their saddles at a bound.

"Away, Bob, and stop for nothing!" said Dick, grimly.

Then they put spurs to their horses and dashed forward like twin thunderbolts.

"Stop!" shrieked Mr. Radcliffe; "stop, or we will fire!"

But the youths did not stop.

Instead they played a trick on the Tories.

They saw the men draw their pistols, and, as they leveled them, the youths turned their horses aside from a straight course, and rode full tilt straight toward the little party of Tories.

The men uttered cries of terror and scattered.

They ran in as many different directions as there were Tories, and did not take time to fire their pistols.

They evidently believed the boys would ride them down, and none of them wished to be knocked down and run over.

It was a clever ruse, and perhaps saved the youths' lives, for had the men fired, they could hardly have helped hitting Dick or Bob, or both.

The youths swept past the frightened Tories and around the house and away toward the gate which opened upon the public highway.

The Tories came running around the house and fired several pistol shots at the youths when they were halfway to the road.

Neither of the youths were hit, but the horse Dick was riding was struck by one of the bullets.

The bullet hit the animal in the leg and crippled it so badly that Dick saw it would be useless to try to ride it.

"Wait a moment, Bob!" he cried; and, leaping to the ground, he ran after his companion.

The Tories saw what had happened, and uttered cries of joy.

Bob brought his horse to a stop as quickly as possible, and as soon as Dick caught up with Bob he leaped up behind him.

"It will be hard on the horse to have to carry double, Bob, but it is the best we can do," said Dick. "Away we go!"

Bob put spurs to the horse, and the animal galloped away as swiftly as it could with its double burden.

"To horse!" the youths heard Mr. Radcliffe cry. "We will pursue and catch them, men. They cannot escape us! The horse has a double burden, and will give out before they have gone five miles!"

"I guess he's right about that, Bob," said Dick, grimly.

"I judge so, Dick."

"There is no use of our trying to escape them by running away from them."

"What are we to do, then?"

"We will have to try strategy."

"Strategy?"

"Yes."

They were now on the public highway, and the horse being fresh was making very good speed.

In front of them, half a mile distant, was a strip of timber.

"When we reach that timber, Bob, we will turn aside and hide from the Tories," said Dick.

"That's a good scheme," said Bob.

When they were about halfway to the timber, they looked back and saw a number of horsemen coming after them.

"They are coming at a lively rate," said Dick; "but we will reach the timber ahead of them."

This proved to be the case.

When they reached the timber the Tories were still nearly a quarter of a mile behind them, but coming rapidly.

As soon as they were hidden from the sight of the Tories, amid the deep shadows cast by the trees, the youths dismounted.

They entered the timber at the side of the road, leading the horse behind them.

They made their way along as rapidly as possible.

By the time the Tories reached the edge of the timber, the youths had penetrated into its depths a distance of perhaps two hundred yards.

"They have taken to the woods," Dick heard a voice say. "And the question is, on which side did they go."

"We'll divide up and part go on one side and part on the other," said another voice.

The youths hastened onward.

It would not do to let the Tories catch them now.

They kept onward, making as good speed as possible.

They believed that they were making as good speed as their pursuers would make.

And such was the case.

The Tories themselves came to this conclusion, after ten or fifteen minutes' work searching in the darkness, and they gave up the chase.

The youths, by pausing and listening frequently, had

been enabled to keep track of their pursuers, and they knew when the men stopped and turned back.

"Now we'll do a little pursuing on our own hook, Bob," said Dick. "We'll follow them back to the road and see what they decide to do."

The youths put this plan into operation.

They turned around and followed the Tories back toward the road.

This was rather a bold thing to do, but its very boldness made it safe.

The Tories would not think of such a thing as that the youths would dare act in such a fashion.

This made the action perfectly safe.

Dick was aware of this, so had no hesitation in keeping within hearing distance of the Tories.

When the Tories reached the road, Dick and Bob were not fifty yards distant.

They came to a stop and listened.

As it was night time, and very still, the youths could hear the voices of the Tories very distinctly, and could understand nearly everything that was said.

"It's no use trying to hunt further for them in the timber," they heard a voice say; "as well look for a needle in a haystack."

"That's right," said another voice which the youths recognized as being Mr. Radcliffe's; "but I hate to give it up and let those young rascals escape after all. I hoped to be able, later on, to turn them over to General Howe. I know he would have been delighted."

"No doubt of it," murmured Bob, ironically.

"Well, what I would like to know," said another voice, "is, how did they get out of that room in the cellar?"

"That is a mystery," was the reply. "Are you sure you locked the door when you came back upstairs, after having taken their supper down to them?"

"Yes, I know I did."

"Then, I don't see how they got out."

"Nor I."

"And I hope you never will know," murmured Dick.

"So do I," replied Bob. "Say, Dick, Miss Elsie was all right after all, wasn't she?"

"Yes, Bob; she was partially instrumental in getting us into that trap, but she was wholly instrumental in getting us out; so she more than evened up the matter."

"So she did."

The youths listened to the men talk and finally had the satisfaction of hearing them riding away.

The youths at once made their way back to the road.

The Tories were distinctly visible and were riding slowly back toward Mr. Radcliffe's house.

The youths, being in the deep shadows cast by the trees, could not be seen.

"Well, what are we going to do, Dick?" asked Bob. "We have about thirty miles to go, and only one horse."

"I'll tell you what I have made up my mind to do, Bob."

"What?"

"There's an old saying, Bob, that the place to look for a thing is where you lost it."

"That's certainly common sense, Dick."

"You're right."

"And you are——"

"Going to go back to Mr. Radcliffe's and get another horse."

This idea struck Bob as being an exceedingly good one.

It was exactly in accordance with his nature.

"That's the scheme, Dick," he said. "They disabled your horse, and it is no more than fair that they should furnish you with another to take its place."

The youths talked the matter over.

It was decided that Bob was to remain where he was.

Dick would slip back to Mr. Radcliffe's and secure a horse if possible.

The strip of timber bordered a stream which bent around behind Mr. Radcliffe's place, and Dick decided to follow around just within the edge of the timber until opposite Mr. Radcliffe's home, and then approach it from the rear.

Bob cautioned him to be careful as he started, and Dick said that he would.

"You hold yourself in readiness to be off at a moment's warning, Bob," Dick said; "when I return, I may come with a rush, and with a gang of Tories at my horse's heels."

"I'll be ready, Dick."

Dick set out.

He made his way at a rapid walk.

He kept just within the edge of the timber.

Dick had to traverse a distance of perhaps a mile.

This took him not more than fifteen minutes.

The timber came up to within perhaps a hundred yards of Mr. Radcliffe's stable.

This open space would have to be traversed.

This would be attended with considerable danger.

The moon was shining brightly, and should any of the Tories happen to be looking in that direction, they could not but see him.

Dick did not hesitate, however.

He reasoned that the Tories would not think of such a thing as that the youths or either of them would dare return, and would not be keeping watch.

It would be an accident if they saw him.

Dick left the edge of the timber and ran across the open space at the top of his speed.

He reached the high stone fence at the rear of the barn without having been discovered.

He was sure of this.

Had he been seen, an outcry would have been raised.

And nothing of the kind had taken place.

He paused for a few moments to get his breath and listen.

He heard no sound.

Placing his hands on top of the stone fence, Dick leaped over.

Dick made his way cautiously to the rear of the barn which was only a few yards distant.

Advancing to the corner, Dick peeped around.

From there he had a good view of the rear of the house.

No one was in sight.

Dick was sure he could hear the murmur of voices, but not clearly.

Looking closely, he saw that the doors leading down to the cellar were open.

A faint streak of light came up out of the cellarway.

"They are in the cellar," Dick thought; "they are doubt trying to figure out how we made our escape from that room."

Dick wondered if all the Tories were in the cellar.

If such was the case, now was the time to secure a horse.

He might be able to slip into the stable, secure a horse and get entirely away without being seen at all.

This would suit him first rate.

Being unarmed—the four Tories having removed Dick and Bob's pistols after having taken the youths to the rear in the cellar—Dick did not wish to become mixed up in an encounter with the Tories if he could help it.

He decided to make the most of his opportunity.

He quickly made his way around to the front of the barn.

The door was open.

Glancing in through the open doorway, Dick saw a number of horses standing in the stalls.

The horses were still bridled and saddled.

The Tories had evidently been in such a hurry to try to learn how the youths had escaped that they had merely led their horses into the stable and then hastened to the house and down in the cellar.

"That makes it all the better for me," thought Dick.

Then he entered the barn.

He advanced cautiously and kept his eyes open.

He thought it possible that there might be one or two of the Tories in the barn.

He neither saw nor heard anything to indicate the presence of any one in the barn, however, and entering one of the stalls he untied one of the halter straps.

He turned to lead the horse out of the barn when he was treated to a startling surprise.

A heavy weight suddenly struck him in the back with considerable force, and Dick was borne to the floor.

"I have you now, you cursed rebel!" cried a triumphant voice. "You won't get away this time!"

Dick understood the situation perfectly.

One of the Tories had been in the entrance of the barn and had leaped over the manger onto Dick's back.

Dick had been taken by surprise, but was not disposed to give up by any means.

The impact of the Tory's form coming unexpectedly had forced Dick to the floor, but the Tory was not heavy enough or powerful enough to keep Dick there.

The youth had his wits about him.

He was determined not to be captured.

Suddenly exerting all his strength, he rose to his feet, the Tory still clinging to him.

Luckily the horse was a gentle one, and stood still.

Had he been fractious and become frightened, he might have trampled Dick and the Tory and injured them seriously.

As it was, they were left to fight it out between themselves.

And fight Dick did.

He fought fiercely.

His liberty, perhaps his life, was at stake.

He handled the Tory in a manner that must have been a surprise to him.

Dick managed to shake the Tory off, and then they eyed each other.

A fierce struggle was inaugurated.

Dick attempted to grasp the Tory by the throat, but the fellow seemed to divine Dick's purpose and prevented its accomplishment.

Dick wondered why the fellow didn't call out to his friends.

Had he done so, and brought them to his aid, they would have been able, of course, to speedily overcome the youth.

The fact of the matter was that the Tory was a fellow who prided himself upon his strength.

He had the reputation of being the "best man" in this portion of the country.

He thought that he would be more than a match for the youth.

He felt perfect confidence in his ability to overpower Dick.

He was somewhat vain.

He wished to capture Dick unaided and then get all the credit of having made the capture.

But he had taken a bigger contract than he realized.

Dick was no common youth.

He was stronger than most men, and was a natural athlete as well.

Few men could stand before him in a hand-to-hand struggle.

The Tory was a strong fellow, but was somewhat clumsy.

The way Dick handled him was a surprise to the fellow.

Dick slammed the Tory against the partition wall between the stalls, bumped him against the manger, and finally threw him to the floor with such force as to almost knock the breath out of the fellow's body.

Dick now succeeded in getting his deadly throat hold.

The Tory, however, realizing that he had caught a Tartar, managed to give vent to a yell for help before Dick could shut off his wind.

Dick compressed the Tory's windpipe so tightly that it would be impossible for the fellow to utter another cry, but Dick feared the one he had already uttered would be sufficient to bring the fellow's friends.

The yell had certainly been loud enough to be heard some distance.

Dick gripped the fellow's throat tightly, completely shutting off his wind.

If the other Tories stayed away two minutes, Dick's opponent would be unconscious and Dick could ride away without hindrance.

But the other Tories were not to remain away.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed when Dick heard the sound of excited voices.

"They are coming," thought Dick. "They heard this fellow's cry and are coming to see what caused it."

Dick realized that he had no time to spare.

If he escaped he would have to act quickly.

The Tory, whose throat Dick was gripping, was not yet unconscious, but he was in a semi-dazed condition, which would render him powerless for a short time.

Dick realized this, and made up his mind to delay no longer.

Suddenly releasing his hold on the man's throat, Dick leaped to his feet.

The horse, whose halterstrap Dick had untied, had stood there a calm and unmoved spectator of the combat between Dick and the Tory.

It had backed part way out of the stall, however, and now stood with its head toward the open doorway.

As Dick leaped to his feet he heard the excited voices of the Tories, and realized that his enemies were close at hand.

It would be impossible for him to lead the horse out of the stable and mount it.

He would not have time.

Dick gave a quick glance at the doorway.

It was an unusually high one.

He decided that it was high enough to permit of the action which he contemplated taking.

Having so decided, he acted instantly.

With a bound he was at the side of the horse.

Another bound and he was into the saddle.

He seized the bridle-reins, and, bending forward on the neck of the horse, plunged his spurs into the animal's flanks.

The horse gave vent to a snort of pain and terror and leaped forward.

It leaped toward the doorway.

It dashed through the opening like a hurricane.

The Tories had just reached the stable and were starting to enter the doorway as the horse came out.

A couple of them were knocked down, while the others scattered, giving vent to cries of terror.

Then, as they saw Dick upon the back of a horse, the cries of terror became cries of rage.

"It is one of those rebel spies!" cried one.

"Shoot the scoundrel!" cried another.

They drew their pistols and fired, but the horse had been making good headway and had carried Dick quite a distance, and as the Tories had fired quickly, the shots naturally went wild.

Dick was not hit.

And fortunately the horse, too, escaped injury.

Dick had feared more for the horse than for himself.

Had the animal been crippled as the other one had been, Dick would have found it a hard matter to escape.

He quickly passed the house, and, as he did so, he happened to glance over his shoulder.

One of the upstairs front windows was open, and leaning through the window, her beautiful face bathed in the mellow light of the moon, and seemingly enchanted in beauty thereby, was Elsie Radcliffe.

The girl waved her hand at Dick, and her voice came down to him in a faint "good-by!"

Dick waved his hand and called out "good-by!" in a cautious tone.

He did not speak loud enough for the Tories to hear him, and he figured if they saw him wave his hand, they would think he was waving it in defiance at them.

A few moments later he was out on the highway, and he urged his horse to its best speed.

Looking back he saw that the Tories had mounted horses and were starting in pursuit.

"All right, my fine fellows," he murmured; "if I am not mistaken, this is a good horse, and as Bob is well-mounted also, we will give you a merry race."

The Tories were soon out in the road and came after Dick at the top of their horses' speed.

They did not gain any, however.

Bob was in the saddle ready, and he urged his horse to a gallop, and then to a run as Dick reached him.

"Well, you succeeded in getting the horse, old man," remarked Bob, as they raced along side by side.

"Yes, Bob, as you see. It was a close shave, though. I was attacked by a fellow in the stable and we had quite a tussle. The other Tories came very near coming in on me and capturing me before I could get the better of him and get away."

"I heard some pistol shots, Dick. I was scared, I tell you. I feared they might have succeeded in shooting you down."

"I was riding away, Bob, at the time, and their shots were fired hastily and went wild."

The timber was only a narrow strip, and the youths were soon through it.

They were glad of it, as out in the open they could see where they were going.

In the timber it had been so dark they had been forced to let their horses pick their own way.

When they were perhaps a quarter of a mile from the timber, they saw their pursuers emerge into the open.

It was now a race in earnest.

The Tories kept after the youths determinedly.

It was evident that they were bound to catch the youths if possible.

But the youths were just as determined that they would not be caught.

The youths were well mounted.

Bob's horse was a good one, had splendid speed and bottom, and Dick soon became satisfied that he had secured one of the best of the Tories' horses.

The youths were pleased to note, after a time, that they were slowly but surely drawing away from their pursuers.

"I guess we'll get away all right, Dick," said Bob, after a backward glance.

"Barring accidents, we will do so, I think, Bob."

The Tories showed commendable perseverance.

They stuck to their work with bulldog-like tenacity.

They kept up the chase for more than an hour.

At the end of that time they were nearly a mile behind, and making up their minds evidently that they could never overtake the youths, they gave up the chase, and, turning their horses' heads in the other direction, started back toward the home of Mr. Radcliffe.

The youths looking back from the top of the hill saw the action of the Tories.

"They've given it up as a bad job, Dick!" cried Bob, in glee; "they're going back."

"So they are, Bob. We can take it easy now, and travel at a more moderate gait."

"Yes, there's no need of hurrying now."

The youths rode steadily onward at a fair rate of speed, and reached the patriot headquarters, not far from Philadelphia, at about eight o'clock.

CHAPTER X.

THE YOUTHS REPORT.

The youths ate their breakfast hurriedly.

Then Dick went at once to General Washington's headquarters.

In addition to the commander-in-chief, General Greene and several other members of the staff were present.

All greeted Dick warmly.

"Well, Dick," said General Washington, with more eagerness than he usually displayed; "what have you discovered? Did you sight the British fleet?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Ah!" exclaimed the commander-in-chief. "When did you sight it, and where?"

"Three days ago, your excellency, and in Delaware Bay."

"What?"

General Washington almost thundered this out, and whirled upon Dick almost fiercely.

"Do you mean to say that you sighted the fleet in Delaware Bay three days ago, and yet have only now reached me with the report!" said the commander-in-chief sternly.

Dick met the gaze of General Washington unflinchingly.

There was a half-smile lurking in the depths of the youth's frank eyes.

He knew that General Washington thought that for once he, Dick, had failed to do his whole duty.

"Yes, your excellency," said Dick, quietly, "I do mean to say that we sighted the British fleet three days ago and have only reported it to you this morning; but there is a good reason for the delay."

The stern look in a measure departed from Washington's face.

He suddenly remembered that Dick had been often tried and had never yet been found wanting.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "State the reason for the delay, Dick."

"The reason is this, your excellency: We sighted the fleet in Delaware Bay three days ago. We supposed, of course, that it would sail up the Delaware River toward Philadelphia, and we were thinking of mounting our horses and riding post haste to you with the news, but we were deterred by the fact that the fleet suddenly turned around and headed back out into the ocean."

"Ah!" exclaimed General Washington.

The other officers uttered exclamations also.

"Go on!" said the commander-in-chief; "you say the fleet headed out to sea again. Which way did it go?"

"Toward the south, your excellency."

"Toward the south?"

"Yes, sir; and as far as we could see it, it was headed in that direction."

"But it came back again," said General Washington, as if stating something which he knew must be true.

Dick shook his head.

"No, your excellency," he said; "we remained on the lookout day and night until yesterday morning, and the fleet did not again put in an appearance. We decided that we had better come here and report to you. We started, but were delayed through being made prisoners by some Tories where we stopped to get dinner, and we only succeeded in getting here this morning."

"You have done well," said the commander-in-chief.

Then the great man dropped his eyes and gazed at the floor for more than a minute.

He was evidently pondering deeply.

Presently he rose to his feet and walked back and forth across the room.

Presently he paused in front of General Greene.

"General," he said, "what does it mean?"

General Greene shook his head and looked puzzled.

"I cannot say, your excellency," he replied; "I confess I am puzzled."

"And I," said the commander-in-chief. "Usually," he went on, "the action of an army or of a fleet will give a cue to the intentions of the commander of such army or fleet, but in this case I must admit that I am all at sea. General Howe's intention in sailing southward from New York was to sail up the Delaware and attack Philadelphia. His fleet has appeared in Delaware Bay, but instead of advancing on up the Delaware, it has turned around and sailed out to sea going toward the south. Now, what can such action mean?"

All were as puzzled as was the commander-in-chief.

They could not think what the action of the fleet meant.

The matter was discussed from every standpoint.

General Washington was suspicious.

He was rather of the opinion that the action of the fleet was a *feint*.

He believed that the fleet would yet return and sail up the Delaware.

The other members of the staff were inclined to think likewise.

"There is only one other thing," said General Washington, "that they would be likely to do, but they would be so much less likely to do it than to try to capture Philadelphia, that I can hardly bring myself to think that they have it in mind."

"What is that, your excellency?" asked General Greene.

"An attack on Charleston."

General Greene and the other members of the staff uttered exclamations.

"I had not thought of that!" the former said.

The others said the same.

"I cannot bring myself to believe that the fleet has really sailed away for good," said the commander-in-chief.

"You think it will return?" asked General Greene.

"I do."

The matter was discussed at some length, and all finally acquiesced in the commander-in-chief's views.

They believed the British fleet would again appear in Delaware Bay and sail up the river and disembark the British troops in the vicinity of Philadelphia.

At last General Washington turned to Dick.

"Dick," he said, "I guess I shall have to ask you to return to your lookout point on the south shore of New Jersey and keep a lookout for the British fleet. Will you go, or shall I send some one else? You must be very tired."

"Oh, not so very, your excellency. A couple of hours rest will fix me up all right, and I shall be glad to return to the lookout post."

"Very well; do so, then. And remember, as soon as you become convinced that the fleet is going to sail up the Delaware, hasten here to inform me of the fact."

"Very well, your excellency."

As an afterthought General Washington told Dick that, in case the fleet did not put in an appearance within five days, he should return and report the fact.

Dick said he would do so, and saluting, he withdrew.

When Dick returned to the quarters occupied by the company of "Liberty Boys," Bob asked him what the commander-in-chief thought of the situation.

"He believes the British fleet will return and sail up the Delaware, Bob," was the reply; "and he wishes us to return and keep watch for it."

"He does?"

"Yes."

"All right," said Bob; "I'd rather do that than be squatting here doing nothing. When will we start?"

"In an hour or so; after we have rested a bit."

"I'm not very tired."

"Neither am I; but there is no particular hurry about setting started. We can get to our destination by night-ll, anyway."

"Yes; so we can."

"Say, Dick," said Sam Sunderland, a bright young "Liberty Boys" of about Dick's age, "why not let some of the rest of us fellows go along with you? We would like to get out for a little trip of that kind."

Dick hesitated.

Then a thought struck him.

By taking a dozen or so of the youths along, he might be able to get even with the Tories who had given himself and Bob so much trouble.

True, he remembered what he owed to Elsie Radcliffe, and had no desire or intention of trying to capture her father, or indeed of making any particular trouble; but he would like to capture a few of the other Tories.

A number of the "Liberty Boys" said they would like to go, and Dick said he would ask permission to take them along.

He returned to headquarters and asked General Washington if he might be allowed to take a dozen or so of the "Liberty Boys" along with him, and when he had explained his reason for wishing to do so, the commander-in-chief gave ready consent.

When Dick returned to the "Liberty Boys" with the information that the commander-in-chief had consented to allow some of the youths to accompany Dick, they were delighted.

The youths all wished to be members of Dick's party, but as this was hardly practicable, Dick, not wishing to show any particular partiality, made up his mind to decide the matter by lot.

He put numbers in his hat, and the youths took turns in drawing numbers. The ones drawing the numbers from one to twelve were the ones who were to go. This was satisfactory to all, and done away with all chance of ill feeling.

Of course, Bob, it was understood, was to go, so he did not draw a number, and when it had been determined who the lucky twelve were, the others congratulated them heartily.

An hour later the party of fourteen rode out of the encampment.

By riding rather hard the party reached its destination just before dark.

Dick had gone out of his way to avoid passing the home of Mr. Radcliffe.

He told Bob that he wished to stop there as he went back.

This was the better plan, as had they stopped as they went, and succeeded in capturing some Tories, they would have been bothered with the fellows for several days.

The first thing the youths did was to look out over the bay and ocean to see if the British fleet was anywhere in sight.

They could see nothing of it.

"Somehow, I don't believe it will come back," said Bob.

"What makes you think so, old man?" asked Dick.

"I don't know; it just seems that way to me."

"It is the same with me," said Dick; "I do not expect to again sight the British fleet from here, though, like you, Bob, I can't explain why I feel that way."

The youths remained there five days and the British fleet not having shown up, they mounted their horses and started to return to the patriot encampment.

They started in the morning, and reached the home of Mr. Radcliffe about noon.

Dick was at the head of the little company, and he led the way through the gateway and up to the house.

Eight of the youths surrounded the house, while six made their way to the barn.

Three men were captured in the barn, and four more in the house, but Mr. Radcliffe was nowhere to be found.

Dick was glad of this, as was Bob also, though, as Dick assured Elsie, he would not have taken her father prisoner, anyway.

The girl was glad to see the youths, and especially Dick, and she did not seem to be sorry that some of the Tories had been captured.

"I get tired of having them hanging around here," she told Dick; "and I wish that papa would take warning by this and not have them come here any more."

Then she hastened away to see about having dinner cooked for Dick and his companions.

"Dinner will be ready in three-quarters of an hour," she told Dick, when she returned; "and," she added, color-

ing slightly, "I promise you that nothing which you eat to-day shall be drugged!"

Dick smiled, and then said earnestly:

"You are a brave and noble-hearted girl, Miss Elsie!"

The dinner was plentiful and wholesome, and the youths felt much better after they had partaken of the food.

When they were ready to start, Dick shook hands with Elsie and thanked her earnestly for what she had done for himself and Bob, and then as they rode away, the youths, at Dick's suggestion, gave three cheers for the beautiful girl.

The "Liberty Boys" arrived safely at the patriot encampment that evening with their Tory prisoners.

Their arrival, bringing prisoners, created considerable interest among the other soldiers, but Dick hastened at once to headquarters to make his report.

When General Washington was informed by Dick that the British fleet had not again put in an appearance, he hardly knew what to think?

The members of his staff were as much at sea as was the commander-in-chief.

They could not think what had come of the British fleet. General Washington was still not satisfied.

He believed that the British fleet would yet show up in the Delaware River, and he sent Dick and Bob back with instructions to watch five days longer.

He also sent scouts to keep watch at the mouth of the

Hudson River, as he thought it possible that the British fleet might be on its way back to New York, with the intention of proceeding up the Hudson to Albany to cooperate with Burgoyne, who was coming down from the north over land.

He also still entertained the thought that it was possible that the British fleet had gone south for the purpose of attacking Charleston.

But for once in his life General Washington was wrong in all his surmises.

When next the British fleet put in an appearance it was at neither of those places, but at a point where no one would ever have expected to see it appear.

THE END.

The next number (20) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' MISTAKE; OR 'WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN,'" by Harry Moore.

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